

Google Faces Political Bias Allegations

By Christina Scully, J.D. Candidate 2021 | October 8th, 2018

As the partisan divide in the country deepens, the possibility of political content bias in social media and search platforms is increasingly becoming a concern. Most recently, Google is combating allegations of [political bias](#) in its search algorithms.

Since an estimated 90 percent of web searches occur on its platform, Google plays a significant role in how society accesses information on the internet. Acknowledging its influence, Google actively seeks to remain transparent around how it filters and provides information. Despite not releasing the specifics on its search algorithms due to proprietary interests, the company has publicly provided its [searching guidelines](#) since 2013. The guidelines make users aware of how Google evaluates factors such as a webpage's "E-A-T" (expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness) as well as how it approaches "potentially harmful pages."

Critics have claimed these guidelines do not provide enough of an insight into the company's distinct search approach. However, a search quality fellow at Google asserted that knowing the intent behind the guidelines is truly more important than having detailed information on the search algorithms themselves. [He emphasized](#) that "The actual algorithm is not as important as what the algorithm is trying to do."

Notwithstanding Google's unequivocal denial of the current allegations, the American public does seem to believe that an anti-conservative bias exists within the tech industry. According to a [recent study](#) by the Pew Research Center, 43% of Americans think major technology firms support the views of liberals over conservatives. The vast majority, 85%, of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents think it is "likely that social media sites intentionally censor political viewpoints."

The [Department of Justice](#) may be interested in addressing the potential for political bias in the tech industry. Last week, Attorney General Jeff Sessions convened a meeting with state attorneys general and other members of the Justice Department. The meeting was to discuss, among other matters, whether there is any evidence to support the claims that social media companies are biased against conservative viewpoints. Ironically, given the topic of political bias, invitation to the meeting was initially offered only to Republican officials. After Democratic attorneys



general voiced their interest in being included in the dialogue, the invitation was extended across the aisle.

Just a few days after the Department of Justice meeting, Google's CEO Sundar Pichai [visited Washington](#) to meet with members of Congress and White House officials. While Google continues to assert that political bias does not affect the content of its search results, Pichai did commit to testify before the House Judiciary Committee this fall and to meet with president Trump and "other internet stakeholders" in the near future.